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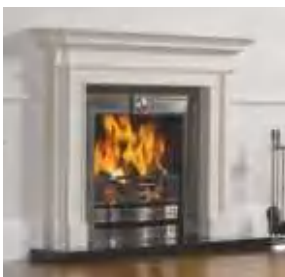


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Welcome

I love the annual ritual of bringing down the decorations from the loft and the fun of **dressing the tree** with my family, which we always do with a plate of mince pies close to hand and a CD of Christmas tunes playing in the background. Every family has its own **traditions**, so share the preparations of the owners of our **festive homes** (from page 19) as they set about decorating for Christmas in their own unique way.

You can also discover **the most stylish schemes for your tree** (page 61), inspirational **place settings** (page 76), six pages packed full of **gift ideas for the entire family** (page 91) plus creative ways to **gift wrap** your presents (page 101). Not forgetting the chance to have a go at **making your own wreath** (page 54) and other stunning floral displays.

I wish each and every one of you a very **Merry Christmas** and I look forward to bringing you plenty more ideas for your home during 2016.

ZOE BALDING, **EDITOR**

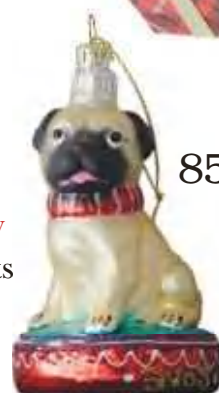
67



71



85



14



13



85



8

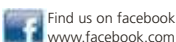
I'm going to be heading out to snap up these charming baubles for my tree

GET IN TOUCH

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CONTENTS

Christmas



91

*Something for everyone
in our six-page gift guide*

for a vintage-style Christmas PLUS Rustic elements to steal the style of this property's country kitchen-diner

41 Less is more

A Kentish home that is a lesson in pared-back elegance PLUS Mix painted furniture and Scandinavian-inspired decorations to clever effect

48 Light fantastic

Scandinavian Yuletide tradition blends with a rural setting to create the perfect English Christmas PLUS Combine floral prints and antique-style furniture to copy the stylish dining room

54 Get creative

Follow our step-by-step instructions to make your own festive decorations

AT HOME

61 O Christmas tree...

Six beautiful colour schemes to ensure the loveliest of branches, from pure and traditional to colourful and eclectic

74 In the dining room

Choose classic pieces that will last you throughout Christmas and the New Year celebrations

76 Table settings

Four stylish looks for a co-ordinated Christmas lunch table

81 20 ideas to make your home beautiful for Christmas

The prettiest ideas – from bedding to festive bunting – to decorate your home from top to bottom

88 In the kitchen

New buys in seasonal shades of red

SHOPPING

7 In the news

The best new buys to transform your home for Christmas

13 Please be seated

Our pick of the most stylish dining chairs

14 Wreaths

Provide a warm welcome with these decorative ideas

17 On the shelf

Festive finds to make sure your mantelpiece is dressed to perfection

HOMES & GARDENS

20 Deck the halls

A family home in Wales that is perfect for celebrating a traditional Christmas PLUS Recreate the family's traditional festive living room with shades of red and green

32 Simply natural

A Devon farmhouse that has been transformed into the perfect setting

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Best dining chairs

20 ways to decorate your home
• Bunting • Tree toppers • Baubles • Lighting • Place settings

COVER STORIES

* REAL HOMES 20, 32, 41, 48 * WIN AN OVERNIGHT STAY IN A SUITE 107 * COLOUR SCHEMES 61 * ULTIMATE GIFT GUIDE 91 * GET CREATIVE 54 * BEAUTIFUL WRAPPING 101 * DECORATIVE WREATHS 14 * BEST DINING CHAIRS 13 * 20 WAYS TO DECORATE YOUR HOME 81

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– see page 104

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Period Homes & INTERIORS

CHRISTMAS 2015

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91 Christmas gift guide

We've found the best ideas for children, for him, for her, for gardeners, for keen cooks and for crafty types

103 It's a wrap

Creative ways to wrap your presents

REGULARS

107 Prize draw

Win an overnight stay in a luxury suite

112 Stockists

The A-Z of where to buy everything inside this issue

114 Shop window

Crafty Christmas decorations, chosen by the experts at the Wealden Fairs

61



61

7



88



76

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IN THE NEWS

Christmas is coming, and we've found the best buys to celebrate in style



SCANDI STYLE

Place this Solvalla star table lamp on a window sill and it will look just as pretty from outside as it does from indoors. It costs £31.40 from Scandi Living. www.scandiliving.com.



Homespun charm

This set of three folk-inspired wooden decorations, £9, from Monty's Vintage Shop, will make a lovely addition to a traditional tree. www.montysvintageshop.co.uk.



SPACE FOR EVERYONE

An extending table is invaluable at Christmas. This Parquet table and four chairs, £1,295, from Furniture Village will comfortably seat up to six people, while the dining bench, £219, seats two adults or three children. 0800 804 8879, www.furniturevillage.co.uk.

SOFTLY DOES IT

Create a warm welcome in your hallway with cosy soft furnishings. Lexington Authentic Star cushion cover, £59; Avoca lambswool throw, £95; for a similar grey cushion try the Ugg Snow Creek cushion, £63; all Amara. www.amara.com.



Express delivery

Sofa Pronto is a new collection of retro and Mid Century designs from Sofas & Stuff, including this Kingsbury sofa, from £335, available in as little as seven days. www.sofasandstuff.com.

FOLK ART

A partridge is one of the iconic symbols of Christmas, and traditionalists will love this rustic partridge tree decoration, £5, from The Contemporary Home. www.tch.net.



Download the free Wisher app, which allows you to use your phone like a wand, capturing your gift list 'wishes' throughout the year, which you can then share with friends and family. www.wisher.com.

Sparkle and shine

Make your Christmas pudding a show-stopper by placing these Ho Ho Ho ice fountains, £3 each, from Talking Tables, in the centre. Simply light them and let your guests enjoy the spectacular display. www.talkingtables.co.uk.



STANDING PROUD

These fun Nutcracker candle holders have been cleverly designed to take either tapered candles or tealights – genius! They cost £35.95 each from PartyLite. www.partylite.co.uk.



TRAY CHIC

Directly inspired by a Nina Campbell family antique, this Billy tray in a high-lacquered finish is the result of a collaboration with American furniture designer Oomph. The price tag of £595 reflects the standard of the craftsmanship. www.ninacampbell.com.



Winter warmer

Update your bed with a new headboard, all with just a few clicks of your mouse. Headboards from The Headboard Workshop can be made to order in a wide range of fabrics and sizes. The Winged Caldey king-size style, pictured here, costs from £658. www.theheadboardworkshop.co.uk.

COOL GOOD LOOKS

If you need plenty of fridge and freezer space, we recommend the Whirlpool Supreme NoFrost BSNF 9152 OX, around £550, standing at more than 2 metres high. www.whirlpool.co.uk.





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Nordic cool

Add drama to festive interiors with the Nordic Grey collection from Jan Constantine. Stockings, cushions and wall hangings are all intricately appliquéd using silver lurex thread on grey wool felt. Prices from £22. www.janconstantine.com.



HANGING AROUND

These charming ornaments, made from heavyweight aluminium, are the perfect way to suspend stockings from the mantelpiece. Choose from a polar bear or a tree design.



Head to Hever Castle & Gardens in Kent for a chance to follow the magical Christmas Trail and meet Santa in his grotto, who is in residence daily from 14-24 December. www.hevercastle.co.uk.

Stocking holders, £34 each, Anthropologie. www.anthropologie.com.

THE HEAT IS ON

Portable gas heaters don't get more stylish than this. The Provence model, £269.99, has a traditional stove design, and features real flame with two heat settings. www.calor.co.uk.



WINTER SCENE

Sophie Allport's range of charming, seasonal linens are just the thing to keep to hand while you're busy in the kitchen with all the Christmas baking. Winter Woodland double oven glove, featuring Christmas trees and stag motifs on a dusty-blue background, £16; tea towel, £7; circular hob cover, £11. www.sophieallport.com.



Sitting pretty

For the prettiest way to welcome your guests to the Christmas lunch table, tie a sparkly decoration and a sprig of festive greenery to the back of each chair. Mini bell star, £6.99, Retreat. www.retreat-home.com.

www.antiques.co.uk

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Bronze Boy Statue



Sorrento Ware Glove Box c1875



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Oil Painting by John Day 1932-1982



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Ecol Originals
Butterfly chair,
£550, John Lewis.

Senn red dining
chair, also available
in other colours,
£36, Danetti.



Madison dining
chair in Stone,
£273, Sweetpea
& Willow.



Loxley grey dining
chairs, sold as a pair,
£179.99, Dunelm.

Please be *seated*

Seat all your guests around the Christmas
lunch table with these stylish options



Cromwell aged
leather dining chairs,
£695 each, Oka.



Rochelle oak
dining chair, set
of two, £239,
Made.com.



Gustave French
chair, sold as a
pair, £395, Within.



Chinwag
reclaimed timber
chair, sold as a
pair, £290, Loaf.



Black faux-
leather butterfly
dining chair, £69,
Cult Furniture.

*Inspired by the
original classic
Eames dining chair*

Wreaths

Provide a warm welcome to visitors to your home this Christmas with a stylish wreath



The shape of a wreath represents eternity; while the evergreen foliage signifies growth



1. Eucalyptus and pine wreath with snow-flecked cones, 55cm (dia), £39, The Contemporary Home
2. Pine cone and twig wreath with berries and foliage, 27cm (dia), £12, The Orchard
3. Mistletoe wreath with frosted foliage, 40cm (dia), £28.95, Rigby & Mac
4. Rustic wreath with white stars and red berries, 26cm (dia), £16, Holsta Bee at Wealden Fairs
5. Premium Midwinter red and black berry wreath, 55cm (dia), £35, John Lewis
6. Silver glitter leaf and berry wreath, 45cm (dia), £10; garland, 1.8m, £10; slim 6ft tree, £20; decorations, from £2; all Tesco
7. Orchard Harvest pre-lit LED wreath featuring True Needle™ technology, 45cm (dia), £69, Balsam Hill.



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Merry Christmas garland, £9; heart candleholder, £9; Nordic tree toppers, £6 each; red jug, £7; all The Contemporary Home.



Frosted pine cone garland, 150cm (l), £9, Bloom.

Deer overmantel decoration with LED lights, £85, Cox & Cox.

Standing Christmas tree decoration, £8, M&Co.

Country-style candelabra, £15, The Contemporary Home.

On the shelf

Make sure your mantelpiece is dressed to perfection this Christmas with these stylish festive decorations



Glass tree ornament, 30cm (h), £10, Next.



Red sleigh ornament, £9.95, Melody Maison.



Red berry and cone garland, 2.7m, £20; luxury charity Christmas cards, £4 for six; all Tesco.



Felt snowflake stocking, £8, John Lewis.



Silver deer-shaped candle, £7.95, The Scandinavian Shop.



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Sari, woven silk, Bangalore, ca. 1867 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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GET THE LOOK

Our shopping expert recreates one of the rooms in each of our real homes with carefully selected furniture and festive accessories

REAL HOMES

28 pages packed with inspirational ideas for creating a beautiful home this Christmas



GARDENING

Get creative with our easy-to-follow step-by-step guide to making your own floral displays





The dining room is transformed for Christmas with a 10ft tree dressed with silver-themed decorations. Sarah likes to salvage the pretty wired organza ribbons used to wrap family presents to twirl around the branches.



DECK THE HALLS

Sarah and Vince Taylor have created a dream home that's perfect for celebrating a traditional family Christmas

FEATURE AMANDA ARTER PHOTOGRAPHY HUGH BURDEN

Warm, welcoming and spectacularly festive are all words that come to mind if you visit Vince and Sarah Taylor at their delightful Old Rectory home at this time of year. The house sits high on a hilltop just a short walk from the local church, village store and pub in a pretty, unspoilt part of rural South Wales. Arrive after dark and you'll be welcomed by the sight of hundreds of tiny white lights, twinkling brightly, high in the trees surrounding the house. 'They make arriving home on a winter evening really special, whatever the weather,' says Sarah, whose enthusiasm for Christmas is shared by Vince and their two teenage children, Alex and Evie.

FESTIVE CELEBRATION

Inside the former rectory, home to the Taylors since 2010, with log fires crackling, candlelit storm lanterns glowing in almost every room and a kitchen full of the aromatic smells of festive spices and home baking, Sarah's clear delight in >>

Key facts



THE OWNERS Sarah and Vince Taylor, who run a commercial interiors company, live here with their two children, Alex and Evie, and Labrador retriever Saffy.

THE PROPERTY A stone rectory in Monmouthshire, built in 1860. **PURCHASED** 2010. **IMPROVEMENTS MADE** The Taylors removed the wall between the dining room and the narrow hallway, and increased the size of the kitchen by knocking into the adjoining scullery.



celebrating is evident. 'This is my favourite time of year,' she explains. 'As Christmas approaches, we love taking our dog Saffy on long country walks to forage for holly, fir and ivy, which we use to make traditional pine-scented garlands and swags for the hall and the many original mantelpieces. 'We add colour and scent to the greenery we've collected with pine cones, cinnamon sticks and our own dried orange slices spiked with cloves, which we dry roast in the Aga,' says Sarah. 'The anticipation of Christmas and getting the house looking really special and welcoming is something we all enjoy and have great fun doing together.'

Alex and Evie love to help with selecting and decorating both the 10ft-high trees the couple buy locally. 'We have one family tree in the sitting room and another silver-themed one in the dining room, because we spend a lot of time in both rooms over the festive period,' says Vince.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS

The house was built in 1860 for a rector, his wife and their 10 children. 'Although it has had numerous owners and refurbishments since then, when we bought the house we needed to make a few further changes to ensure the house worked well for us as a family, while also retaining or reinstating as many original features as possible,' says Vince. Many Victorian houses had gloomy, >>





Top Sarah's home-baked mince pies and meringues disappear quickly at this time of year. **Above** 'We spend a lot of time in the kitchen and it really is the heart of our home.

The Aga ensures it's always warm and cosy, even on the coldest day, says Sarah. **Left** and **far left** The kitchen was

designed by a local company to Sarah's specification. 'We chose marble for the island unit top and worktops, which is smart but very practical too.' The walls are painted in Strong White, and the units are in Bone, both by Farrow & Ball (01202 876141, www.farrow-ball.com).

Style advice

'By using a neutral palette of Farrow & Ball paint finishes throughout, we've drawn attention to the fine architectural details of the house.'

*Get
the
look*
p31

The family have amassed a huge collection of Christmas decorations over the years. 'We always fit in a weekend trip to London at this time of year, and the children bring back a new decoration each for the tree,' says Sarah.



'The anticipation of Christmas and getting the house looking really special is something we all enjoy and have great fun doing together'



The warmth of a real fire burning in the grate lends a cosy, inviting feel to the living room. Tealights throw out jewel colours from tiny Moroccan glass tumblers on the mantelpiece.



Decorations in a traditional palette of red and gold adorn the tree in the sitting room.

narrow hallways, but the Taylors' inspired decision to remove the wall between the dining room and the hall has introduced significant light from the dining room's south-facing French doors, creating an impressive new space.

They also installed an efficient new heating system throughout the house, stripping out all the 'hideous' 1960s radiators and replacing them with original cast-iron versions in keeping with the period of the house, sourced from a local salvage yard and painted in Farrow & Ball colours.

Vince and Sarah also decided to combine the rectory's original kitchen and scullery area, both located on the cooler north side of the house, to create one large kitchen and dining area, which has also introduced more light. 'By concealing uplighters above the new kitchen cabinets,

>>

3 of the best traditional decorations

1. Glitter drape-effect red bauble, £1, B&Q **2.** Papier mâché hand-painted bauble, part of a set of four, £16.95, Decorator's Notebook **3.** Gift box bauble, fill it with sweets or a small gift, £3.50, The Contemporary Home



For stockists turn to page 112



the amazing vaulted ceiling above the former scullery has become a focal point. The new central island below provides a really sociable cooking and entertaining space.'

LIGHT AND SPACE

Sarah insisted on pared-down luxury in the newly decorated bathrooms and en suites. Gleaming vintage chandeliers and subtle dimmed lighting, together with Villeroy & Boch fittings and underfloor heating, provide practicality with more than a hint of glamour. Vince's practised eye has introduced light and space to terrific effect, and his skill, together with Sarah's pretty yet practical accessorising, has given this lovely old rectory a contemporary lease of life with classic, comfortable styling throughout. 

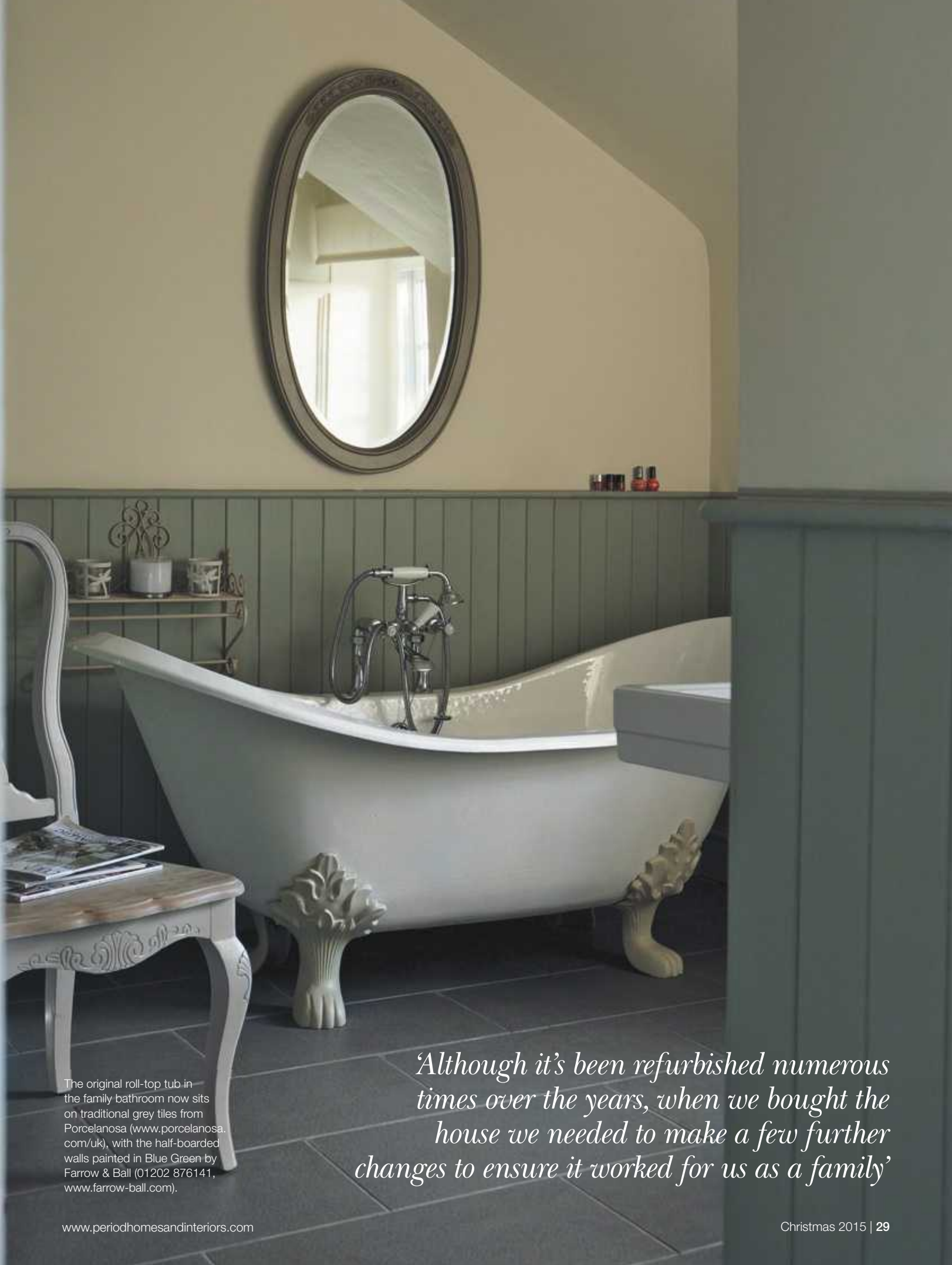


Above A door in the master bedroom leads through into Sarah and Vince's en suite.

Right Late-afternoon sun filters through the window of

the master bedroom.

The French oak dressing table and upholstered chair were bought en route from a family holiday in Cornwall.



The original roll-top tub in the family bathroom now sits on traditional grey tiles from Porcelanosa (www.porcelanosa.com/uk), with the half-boarded walls painted in Blue Green by Farrow & Ball (01202 876141, www.farrow-ball.com).

'Although it's been refurbished numerous times over the years, when we bought the house we needed to make a few further changes to ensure it worked for us as a family'



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Be inspired by Sarah's style
GET THE LOOK

Use opulent tones of sage and taupe teamed with gold and red to recreate this festive living room



Shiny gold pumpkin-shaped bauble, £1, B&Q.



Ashley spruce 5ft artificial Christmas tree by Swift, £99.95, White Stores.



For stockists turn to page 112



Tolkien grand sofa in Ibsen velvet fabric in Pecan, from £2,714, John Sankey.



Bruce straw-yellow striped cushion, 50 (w) x 70cm (d), £45, Scandi Living.



Aleah black painted chandelier, 61cm (dia), £480, Out There Interiors.

Comes in four heights and can be made to your required size



Portofino French linen chair, 93 (h) x 70 (w) x 75cm (d), £717.78, Beau Decor.



Black painted cast-iron radiator, 46 (h) x 88.9cm (w), £473.33, The Radiator Centre.



Gold-leaf wine glasses, set of four, £40, Black Orchid.



The huge original fireplace and wood-burning stove in the living room create a cosy focal point at Christmas, and is a favourite spot for Henry the Korthal Griffon. The sofa was bought for a song at Totnes market, and re-upholstered in cream linen.



SIMPLY NATURAL

Holly and Philip Keeling bought a neglected Devon farmhouse and lovingly transformed it into the perfect setting for a vintage-style family Christmas

FEATURE JANE BOWLES/GAP INTERIORS PHOTOGRAPHY COLIN POOLE/GAP INTERIORS

The living room alcoves are papered in Humming Birds by Cole & Son (020 7376 4628, www.cole-and-son.com). The fireside chair is covered in Acorn and Leaf from Vanessa Arbuthnott (01285 831437, www.vanessaarbuthnott.co.uk).



Christmas at interior designer and stylist Holly Keeling's house is always a family affair. 'I have such happy memories of Christmas from my own childhood that I love letting my children share in the preparations,' says Holly.

'Getting out the boxes of decorations I've collected over the years is so exciting for the children, as it means that Christmas is on the way at last.'

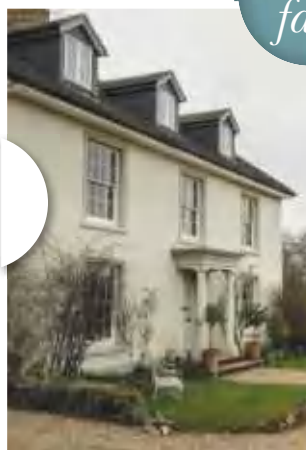
TAKING THE PLUNGE

Holly's elegant Devon home, with its subtle palette of restrained neutral shades, and her cherished collection of antiques and painted furniture, is also the perfect setting for a vintage-style Christmas. However, the house was not always as pristine as it is today. 'I wanted to buy this house right from the moment I saw it, but it certainly wasn't a challenge for the faint-hearted,' says Holly. 'In fact, it was a total wreck. The interior was dark and dismal, the floorboards were rotten and there was a hideous crazy-paving fireplace in the drawing room. It also

needed brand new plumbing and electrics, and there were acres of black slate tiles that made the whole place look really gloomy,' she continues.

Holly and her husband Philip initially decided the property was too expensive, given the amount of work required. But when the house came back onto the market some time later at a much lower price, they decided to take the plunge and go for it. As >>

Key facts



THE OWNERS Holly Keeling, an interior designer and stylist, and her husband Philip live in the house with their three children, Charlotte, Louis and Ben, and Henry the Korthal Griffon.

THE PROPERTY A Georgian farmhouse in Devon dating back in parts to the 16th century.

IMPROVEMENTS MADE The couple undertook a full-scale renovation, demolishing the internal partitions and stripping out the slate flooring to create more light and space in this once dark and dingy 'wreck'.



'I saved money where I could so that I could splurge on this lovely oak dining table and chairs from Oka (0844 815 7380, www.okadirect.com) – it's the perfect size for family celebrations at Christmas,' says Holly.

Style advice

'Only buy things for your home that you absolutely love – that way you will always be surrounded by things that give you pleasure.'

Get
the
look
p39

Painting the walls in Pointing by Farrow & Ball (01202 876141, www.farrow-ball.com) helps keep this open-plan kitchen/dining area feeling light and spacious. The bespoke kitchen cabinetry is from Barnes of Ashburton (01364 653613, www.barnesofashburton.co.uk).



Glossy paintwork and limestone flooring keeps the welcoming entrance hall looking light and bright.

‘Getting out the boxes of decorations I’ve collected over the years is so exciting, as it means that Christmas is on the way’

soon as they’d sealed the deal, the couple began a full-scale renovation, working in tandem with their team of local builders. One year on, Holly had given birth to her daughter Charlotte, so she and Philip then resolved to get the remainder of the building work completed as quickly as possible. ‘We’d begun to feel the builders were a permanent fixture – but finally we waved them goodbye,’ she says.

Holly has collected vintage furniture and objects since she was a child, and cheerfully describes herself as a ‘collectaholic’. ‘I grew up going to car boot sales and junk shops with my mother every weekend, looking out for treasures, and I suppose I’ve never really stopped,’ she says.

When it came to designing the interior of her new home, she took her inspiration from classic English country house style. ‘I wanted everything to look as though it had been here forever,’ she explains. Holly cheerfully confesses that her style is constantly evolving. ‘Phil gets quite exasperated, as I’m forever moving things around. But I can’t rest easy until everything looks just right!’ She

loves sourcing home accessories and old furniture, and her boundless passion for collecting found the perfect outlet a couple of years ago, when she converted one of the outbuildings at her farmhouse home into a show barn – a unique space selling vintage furniture and decorative objects.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS

Holly starts preparing for Christmas several weeks before the big day. ‘I like to decorate the house in a natural style, with lots of greenery and berries from the garden and local hedgerows. It’s an incredibly busy time, as I make lots of Christmas decorations for the shop. On the big day itself, all the family come to us, and our celebration is thoroughly traditional – opening presents in the morning, followed by a walk to the local pub. Then it’s home to a glass of Champagne in front of a roaring log fire before sitting down to roast turkey with all the trimmings. It’s the perfect family Christmas.’

• You can contact Holly Keeling via her website at www.hollykeeling.co.uk. 



Above Vintage fabric gives the guest bedroom a distinctly French feel. The chest is a family heirloom, and the chair was bought at auction. **Right** and **above right** Soft plum-coloured accents provide subtle colour in the main bedroom. 'I bought this lovely bed in Totnes market and had it re-upholstered locally,' says Holly. The pediment over the en-suite bathroom door adds a touch of grandeur, and was originally part of an old wardrobe. The wirework mannequin, floral sofa and oval gilt mirror were all sourced locally at auction.



Be inspired by Holly's style GET THE LOOK

Choose rustic elements to recreate this country-style dining room

Midsummer Night's Dream chandelier, 82cm (dia), £355, The French Bedroom Company.



Grey wire basket, 27 (h) x 25 (w) x 12cm (d), £16.50, Pastel Lane.



Chinese-style wardrobe made from reclaimed elm wood, 165 (h) x 85 (w) x 50cm (d), £1,095, Shimu.

Da Terra Geronimo tableware, from £14, Unique & Unity.



Hand-painted so no two pieces are ever the same

New Frontier extending dining table, 78.5 (h) x 150 (w) x 100cm (d), £715, Barker and Stonehouse.



Jewelled pears, set of 12, 8cm (h), £17.50, Cox & Cox.



Oak cross-back dining chair with rattan seat, 89 (h) x 43 (w) x 40cm (d), £120, Rockett St George.



Lacquered window panel, 152 (h) x 80cm (w), £695, Orchid Furniture.



For stockists turn to page 112



Paddy duck-egg stripe seat pad with contrasting blue piping, 40 (w) x 40cm (d), £15, Ragged Rose.

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LESS IS MORE

A Kentish home with classic proportions is the setting for a simply stunning Christmas with pared-back elegance

FEATURE JO LEEVERS/NARRATIVES PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD GADSBY/NARRATIVES



Above from top A compact sofa in the kitchen makes this large space a sociable room for informal family gatherings. The travel poster is from the Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (www.shoptwrmuseums.co.uk). Mince pies and seasonal treats get the whole family feeling festive. **Main picture** 'Simple paper decorations from RE (01434 634567, www.re-foundobjects.com) are all that's needed to decorate this room for Christmas,' says Hilary. The kitchen is by Plain English (0870 240 3562, www.plainenglishdesign.co.uk).





'Less is definitely more – even at Christmas. Select decorations you really love for displays that exude a simple yet striking beauty'

As a wintry dusk descends on the Kentish countryside, the windows of Hilary and Graham Flatman's Georgian home shine a bright golden welcome. Inside, tables, alcoves and sills are bathed in the glow of candlelight and the property's tall, classic proportions are adorned with pure white and silver decorations. The seasonal and Scandi-influenced decor is the perfect match for the refined Georgian architecture, creating a simple, beautiful Christmas.



PURE VALUES

Hilary loves all things refined – almost, she admits, to the point of austerity – so the heritage of this converted farmhouse in east Kent captured her imagination from the start. 'I'm drawn to the purity of Georgian architecture,' she explains. 'I like the symmetry, combined with the tall ceilings and lofty windows.' In fact, she loves the elegance of the >>

Key facts



THE OWNERS Hilary and Graham Flatman and their son Christian. Hilary is retired and Graham is a psychologist. **THE PROPERTY** A Georgian farmhouse in Kent that was extended in the Forties. **PURCHASED** 2004. **IMPROVEMENTS MADE** The couple bought the house from a lady who had lived here since the 1940s, so a new central heating system, fresh bathroom fittings, replastering and new flooring were all on the couple's to-do list.



windows so much that she tries to avoid obscuring them. 'Curtains or even blinds would detract from their plain beauty,' she says.

CLEAN LINES

Hilary's architectural ideal would be a narrow flat-fronted 18th-century English townhouse, like those in east London's Spitalfields. But this converted farmhouse in the heart of the Kentish countryside is a far cosier version of Georgian that comes into its own at Christmas, with its crisp, clean lines softened by Hilary's decorative touches, muted paint shades and tactile use of wood and stone.

The stately farmhouse, which once worked the surrounding pastures and fruit orchards, comes with an interesting history. The wing of the house to the left of the front door has a medieval core, as evidenced by some hefty ancient beams that were found deep within the bedroom walls. However, the wing was rebuilt in 1805, making this an essentially Georgian home. In 1947, the owners added the right-hand wing in the style of British architect Edwin Lutyens. The resulting Lutyensesque-meets-Georgian rooms are generous and expansive – an appropriate backdrop for Hilary and Graham's furniture and accessories. The wide doorways >>





Main picture 'The dining room comes into its own for special occasions like Christmas,' says Hilary. 'The shape of the antique table echoes the curve of the bow window and the curved wall.'

Below from top Freshly picked foliage and berries decorate the Christmas

dinner table. Hilary and Graham love the wide hallway for its Georgian sense of balance, its wooden flooring and the impressive staircase.

Far left Flickering candlelight reflects off the Scandinavian-style silver decorations on the console table and in the large mirror in the hallway.





'When we replastered in the main bedroom we discovered the original beams. They weren't handsome enough to leave exposed, but it's nice to know that medieval core is there,' says Hilary. The hare sculpture (right) in the guest bedroom was the first thing to be unpacked when the couple moved in.



and spacious rooms also mean the house is mobility-friendly, which makes life easier for the couple's youngest son, Christopher, who uses a wheelchair.

A WARM WELCOME

The property's paint shades are drawn from a palette of grey, pale green and mole-soft brown, while texture comes in the form of stone and timber flooring: plain and simple but with a natural warmth. As for the kitchen, Hilary had admired Plain English's designs for many years, after working near the company's flagship store in Marylebone in the early Nineties. Her yearning hadn't waned over time. 'I liked the pared-back, slightly strict style of its Shaker kitchen – it's very calm and beautiful.'

Come Christmas-time, the kitchen is a flurry of activity, with Hilary and Graham's grandchildren and three other grown-up children visiting, including their eldest son, David Flatman, the former professional rugby player for England and Bath. On Christmas Eve, as daylight wanes, the family starts to arrive. And, as is the case every year, their first sight as they enter the drive will be the familiar tall windows, glowing with wreaths of fairy lights and candles. It's a simple, effective welcome that's wholly in keeping with the spirit of Christmas in this quintessentially Georgian home. 



'For the guest bathroom, I kept to materials that are simple, natural and strike a chord with me, such as these pebble tiles on the floor,' says Hilary. You can find similar at www.marble-mosaics.com.

Be inspired by Hilary's style
GET THE LOOK

Take your cue from this Scandi-style kitchen-diner with snowflake decorations, painted furniture and classic accessories



Decadent Decs tissue and foil snowflake fans, set of three, £11, Talking Tables.

Factory pendant light in white, £45, A Splash of Colour.



Chichester 3ft Original bookcase in Limestone, 209 (h) x 103 (w) x 49cm (d), £1,500, Neptune.



French-style metal cutlery holder, £22.75, Boutique Provencale.



Noel wooden tabletop sign, £15, BHS.



Mirka large glass cake stand, £55.08, Furnish.



Lyall ladder-back chair in cream, £149, John Lewis.



Snowberries wreath with pine cones, 60cm (dia), £44.95, The Farthing.



Italian leather two-seater sofa, 84 (h) x 162 (w) x 94cm (d), from £1,806, Sweetpea & Willow.

Available in a wide selection of colours



LIGHT FANTASTIC

The Marten family celebrate the season by bringing Scandinavian Yuletide tradition to a period rural setting that's perfect for an English Christmas

FEATURE GREG COOK PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD PARSONS

When it comes to Yuletide traditions, the Scandinavians know a thing or two about lighting up the darkness. Yet when your thoughts turn to celebrating a classically English Christmas, chances are you'll imagine a charming Georgian home, straight from a Dickens novel, nestling in the countryside with log fires, wreathed mantels and candles twinkling in the windows. So picture a Christmas that incorporates the charm of Scandinavian tradition and style, all set within period surroundings in the heart of rural England.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

It may sound like an impossibly perfect ideal, but this is precisely the kind of Christmas that Swedish-born Camilla Marten has created. Since she and husband Miles, a chartered surveyor, decamped to East Sussex from south London, the couple have made sure the spacious but cosy five-bedroom house has become a true family home, and that their children, Oskar, Maja and Yohan, can enjoy a unique 'best of both worlds' Christmas in this idyllic setting.

The property the Martens are now proud to call home is a grand Grade II* listed Georgian manor farmhouse dating from 1780, which later

underwent an extensive redesign in the 1920s at the hands of the eminent Edwardian architect and designer Sir Edward Maufe. This has created a property with a wonderful mixture of light-filled, high-ceiling rooms flanked with tall sash >>

Key facts



THE OWNERS Camilla Marten lives in the house with her husband Miles, a chartered surveyor, and their three children. **THE PROPERTY** A Georgian manor farmhouse dating from 1780 in rural East Sussex. **PURCHASED** 2003. **IMPROVEMENTS MADE** A new kitchen has been added to this Grade II* listed property, which from the outside cleverly mimics an authentic orangery, while on the inside is a homage to clean, bright Scandinavian style.

Home truth

'I'm thrilled with our new kitchen, as there's wonderful natural light all day long through the sash windows on three sides and via the glass roof.'

This large, light-filled room, designed to mimic an authentic Georgian orangery, demonstrates Camilla's flair for blending Scandinavian and English influences. The contemporary country cabinetry by Martin Moore from the New Classic range (0845 180 0015, www.martinmoore.com) has been given a Gustavian feel using a palette of off-white and grey.

The spacious sitting room is the perfect setting for a family Christmas. The original oak floor has been restored, as has the Georgian marble fireplace, which is flanked by a pair of comfy sofas and a deco-style chrome-framed coffee table by Louise Bradley (020 7589 1442, www.louisebradley.co.uk).



3 of the best sparkly candle votives



1. Beefayre Wild Fig scented candle, £16.50, Annabel James.
2. Townscape filigree copper votive, £12.50, The Scandinavian Shop.
3. Enchanted Christmas tealight votives, £1, Poundland.





The property manages to feel authentically period, without any sensation of stepping into an old-fashioned interior

windows, complemented by wide staircases and a mixture of natural wood and marble floors.

As a testament to the design, the property somehow manages within the confines of its beautiful old red brick walls to feel well-proportioned yet intimate, elegant without being grandly austere, and authentically period, but without any sensation of stepping into an old-fashioned or dated interior.

Much of this can undoubtedly be credited to the efforts of Camilla and her husband who, as well as thoroughly refurbishing the property after their arrival, are responsible for the property's most recent addition – a brand new stand-alone kitchen space, which is connected to the main building and designed to give the exterior appearance of being an authentic period orangery. The fact that any extension whatsoever has been allowed on such a historically precious period property makes this house even more of

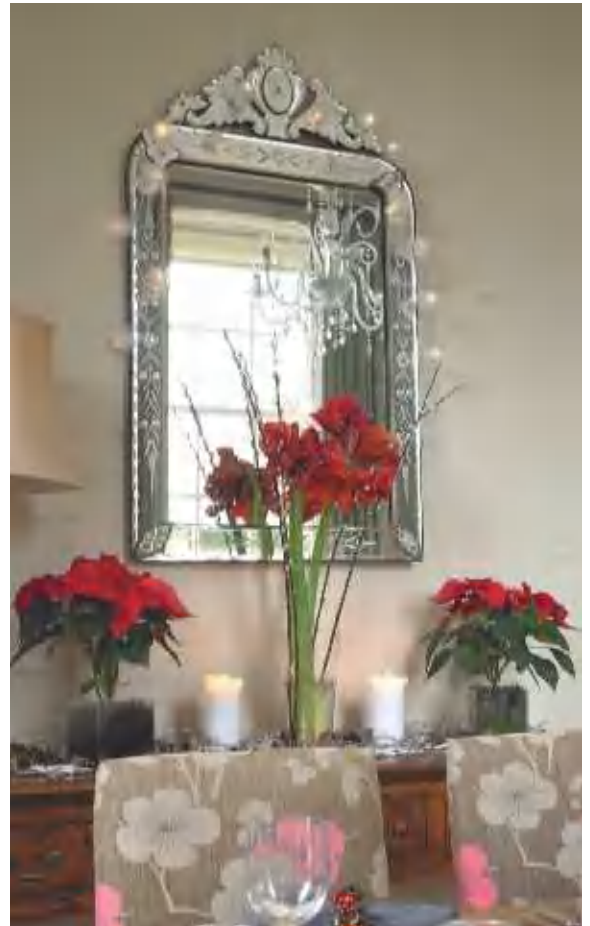
a one-off, and also bears testament to the Martens' clear vision and dedication.

THE GREEN LIGHT

'After coming here we gradually completed all the necessities on the refurbishment tick-sheet,' recalls Camilla, while comfortably ensconced behind the large central island of her shiny new kitchen. 'The interiors and amenities were all very dated, so we refitted the bathrooms, installed a new shower, fitted new carpeting throughout the upstairs, exposed the original oak and marble floors in the main downstairs rooms and repainted pretty much every wall. We lived that way for a long while and everything was great, except for one major drawback: a small and cramped kitchen that was completely out of proportion with the rest of the house. We knew the only way to get the right kind of kitchen was to extend onto the back of the property, but our chances of doing that on a >>



The elegant dining room with its full-height sash windows retains the original travertine flooring laid in the 1920s. Camilla purchased the oak dining table from the previous owners, which provides the perfect centrepiece for Christmas dining.



Grade II* listed building were virtually nil. However the couple bit the bullet, employed sympathetic architects and persisted, waiting patiently for years while their first two applications were rejected – until, to their delight, the plans for a kitchen designed in the style of a Georgian orangery were approved.

GETTING IT RIGHT

‘Having got such an amazing break, we knew we had to get every element of the design just right,’ Camilla explains. This carefully contrived, meticulously constructed extension is built to give the appearance of being a credible original feature, likely to be found within a building of this period and stature. ‘The windows, door and sandstone architrave were all handmade to mirror the original building and every brick went through a distressing process to age it before it was laid,’ she says. ‘I love the hipped glass orangery roof, which doubles the natural light in here. I think as a space it’s very sympathetic to the original building, but it definitely also has a traditional Scandinavian country feel to it as well. Maybe that’s why I always feel so encouraged to create the Swedish elements of our international Christmas.’ 



Be inspired by Camilla's style GET THE LOOK

Combine floral prints with antique-style furniture to copy this stylish dining room

Restored 20th-century five-arm chandelier, £1,575, Fritz Fryer.



Ely dining chair in Romo Keiko Jaipur Pink fabric, £259, Multiyork.



Red berry wreath, 60cm (dia), £40, The Contemporary Home.



Carved console with lattice shelf, 82 (h) x 105 (w) x 45cm (d), £695, Shimu.



Raj table lamp with polished nickel base and cream shade, 53cm (h), £58.80, Dār Lighting.



Serafina linen fabric (left), £72 per m; Marrakesh floral linen fabric, £47 per m; both Fabrics & Papers.



Galerie des Glaces mirror, 136 (h) x 89cm (d), £799, The French Bedroom Company.



Poinsettia in Nordic pot, 10.5cm (h), £7.99, Dobbies.



Reproduced from a style that was common in China during the Qing dynasty

Rustic stag cracker, pack of six, £25, House of Fraser.





GET CREATIVE

Gather some greenery, berries and flowers and follow our step-by-step instructions to make your own festive decorations to adorn your home

Take a look around your garden and in the hedgerows to see what nature's rich bounty has on offer – you may be surprised at the variety of lovely seasonal material your garden will yield. Things to look out for include

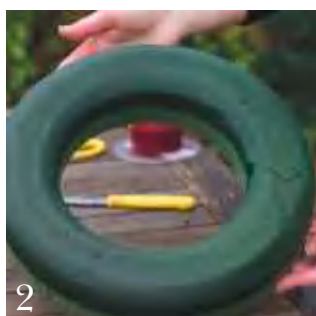
flexible coloured stems, interesting foliage, jewel-like berries, faded translucent seedheads and winter flowers. Your local garden centre or florist will have additional seasonal material to augment your findings.

DECORATIVE WREATH

Working with a colour scheme lends an elegant touch with this wreath, which can also be used as a tablecentre



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15

MATERIALS

- Soaked Oasis floral foam (one with a plastic tray if using as a tablecentre)
- Secateurs
- Sharp knife
- Scissors
- Wire cutters
- Ribbon
- Green florist stub wires
- An assortment of foliage – blue spruce, eucalyptus, berried ivy
- Floral detailing – hydrangea, skimmia japonica, viburnum
- Decorative detailing – pine cones, dried apples and chillies, cinnamon sticks
- Oasis Spray Colour in Burgundy (visit www.oasisfloral.co.uk for where to buy)

Tip Always work in odd numbers for detailing. Check for any gaps – the balance of the wreath must be even

HOW TO MAKE

1. Trim the edges of the Oasis to soften the shape of the floral foam.
2. The resulting curved shape should resemble a tyre.
3. Tie on a ribbon for hanging.
4. Push in pieces of spruce around the outer rim of the floral foam.
5. Add pieces of spruce to the top and inside rim of the foam, making sure you don't overfill it – you need to leave room for other foliage.
6. Fill in the gaps using pieces of berried ivy and eucalyptus.
7. Hold up the wreath to look at the shape and tweak where needed.
8. Dot some skimmia pieces around the wreath and add some viburnum flowers.
9. Lightly spray the hydrangea pieces with burgundy colour to increase their intensity.
10. Push five clumps of hydrangeas into the wreath.
11. Wire the backs of the pine cones and add to the wreath.
12. Wire some cinnamon sticks together and finish with a ribbon.
13. Wire the cinnamon sticks in place.
14. Wire the apples and add to the wreath.
15. Finish by wiring in a few dried chillies.

Note: Refresh your wreath by replacing or adding a few flowers for Christmas Day. >>



RUSTIC TABLE DECORATION

This pretty design will provide a homespun decoration to the Christmas lunch table and is easy to adapt to complement your colour scheme



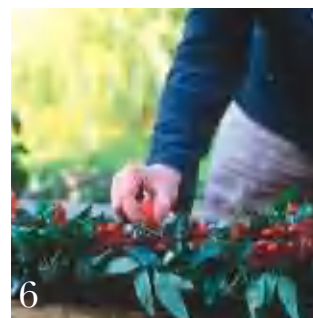
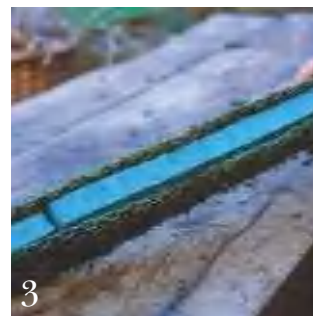
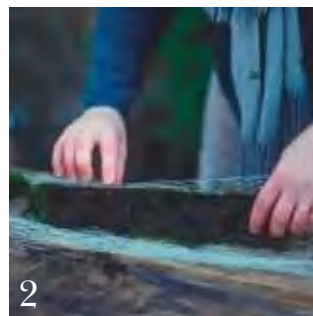
Tip To attach fruit or berries, thread on wire or spike with a toothpick

MATERIALS

- Chicken wire (about 60 x 25cm)
- Moss
- Oasis floral foam
- Wire
- Foliage – good choices include holly, ivy, hypericum, box, spruce, eucalyptus, viburnum, bay, rosemary, winter jasmine, nandina, mistletoe, sarcococca, stems of coloured willows and dogwoods, contorted hazels, physalis, rose hips, seed heads of alliums and teasel, sedum, hydrangeas, globe artichokes, snowberries, callicarpa, euonymus, pyracantha, cotoneaster, skimmia, crabapple, pieris

HOW TO MAKE

1. Gather together your foliage.
2. Fold the chicken wire along both long edges to create a trough.
3. Place moss under the folds so it is facing outwards when filled. Put Oasis in the centre of the trough, ensuring a nice snug fit. Oasis can be damp or dry, depending on how long the display needs to last.
4. Tie the ends of the trough with wire to secure them, then fill the centrepiece with greenery so that the Oasis is covered.
5. Fill with seasonal colour, such as rose hips, holly, crabapples on sticks, hydrangeas, sedum heads and Chinese lanterns.
6. Insert candles at regular intervals.



Add a secret message...

According to the tradition, every flower has a symbolic meaning: **Birch** – new beginnings • **Camellia** – love, good luck • **Evergreens** – continuity of life, protection, prosperity • **Fir** – rebirth • **Holly** – protection, good luck • **Ivy** – fidelity, protection, healing, marriage, victory, good luck • **Mistletoe** – peace, prosperity, wellness, fertility • **Oak** – endurance, strength, triumph, protection, good luck • **Yew** – death, last day of the solar year.

Diary date...

There's often confusion over when Twelfth Night falls, but all decorations need to come down on 5 January.

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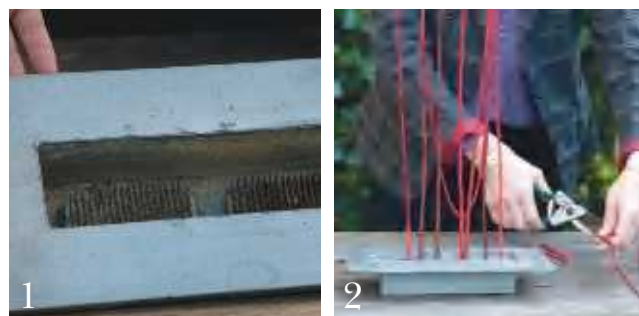


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Tip Spray-painted berried ivy or pine cones, black-stemmed cornus and silver-foliaged cinerarias would also work well in this arrangement



A WINDOW SILL ARRANGEMENT

MATERIALS

- Shallow metal or ceramic container
- Two metal floristry pin holders (available from www.easyfloristsupplies.co.uk)
- Waterproof floral tac (available from www.easyfloristsupplies.co.uk)
- Red cornus stems
- 3-5 Japanese anemone stems with seedheads
- 5 hydrangeas
- 5 nerines
- 3-5 sedums
- 5-7 cinerea eucalyptus stems
- 7 tree ivy stems
- 5 Midelino sticks (available from www.oasisfloral.co.uk)
- Oasis Spray Colour in Silver (visit www.oasisfloral.co.uk for where to buy)

HOW TO MAKE

1. Place the two metal pinholders in the container and secure with floral tac.
2. Using a mix of heights, place cut cornus stems so they descend in height from the centre on either side.
3. Lightly spray the anemone seedheads with silver paint.
4. Place the anemone stems at regular intervals in the arrangement.
5. Add nerines of graduated heights.
6. Arrange the hydrangeas in the container, using longer cut stems in the middle of the arrangement.
7. Dot sedums around the hydrangeas and place berried ivy at the base.
8. Intersperse with some eucalyptus.
9. Create some loops with Midelino sticks at the back of the design. Some can also be used straight to echo the cornus stems.
10. Once completed, add water.

As most of the plants are in their final stages of flowering, this arrangement will keep fresh for a maximum of 10-14 days

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O Christmas tree...

Ensure the loveliest of branches on your tree this Christmas. Whether your tastes are pure and traditional or veer towards colourful and eclectic, we've created six beautiful looks that are all perfect for period homes

Dew Drop 7ft tree, £79.99; decorations, from £1.49; multi-function LED lights, set of 240, £24.99; hessian Santa sack, £7.99; limited-edition check chair, £479; all Homebase.



Introduce seasonal soft furnishings to add an extra layer of comfort – look out for tactile throws and festive themed cushions

Aspen 6ft tree, £45; Santa tree topper, £4; decorations, from £1.50; LED gingerbread houses, £3.50 each; heart bark lantern, £4; charity Christmas cards, from £1; Capri armchair, £299; Santa cushion, £8; sheepskin rug, £30; all Tesco.

Christmas pudding
bauble, £2 for
three, Tesco.



'Tis the season...
bauble, £16 for four,
House of Fraser.



Alpine bell
decoration,
£3.50, Next.



Embroidered
stars, £1.50
each, Wilko.

Homespun *charm*

Nostalgic designs are back in fashion
and perfect for a cheerful festive theme

Take a trip down memory lane with a scheme
packed full of vintage-style decorations in a
timeless red and white colour palette. We've
spotted an abundance of must-buy designs, including
traditional Father Christmas motifs, quirky knitted
characters, jingle bells and retro baubles. Once the tree
is packed full, display any leftover decorations in bowls
or clear vases for an extra seasonal flourish.



Gift wrap, from a selection; red glitter
Noel decoration, £2.50; Santa head
decoration, £3; natural squirrel
decoration, £3.50; Christmas pudding
decoration, £3.50; car with tree
decoration, £5; all BHS.

Post box
decoration, £4,
Marks & Spencer.



Wooden fox terrier
decoration, £5.95,
Poppy Treffry.



Happy Holidays pasta
bowl, £4; hanging trio
of bells, £6; paper twist
baubles, £1.50 each;
Christmas pudding
bell, £4; Ski Scene
decorations, £10
for 10; mini reflector
baubles, £1.50 each;
all Sainsbury's.



Snowman, robin and Father Christmas
decorations, £12 for three, Cath Kidston.

White glitter stag decoration, £4, John Lewis.



Silver-beaded onion bauble, £4, Marks & Spencer.



White tree decoration, £2.50, BHS.



Silver bauble, £9.99, H&M.



Below Mercury finial drop ornament, £3.49; open-front bauble with tree, £3.49; white glass heart decoration, £2.49; clear feather-filled bauble, £1.99; clear glass teardrop with jewelled band, £3.49; iridescent honeycomb bauble with glitter, £3.49; ceramic bird hanging decoration, £4.99 for six; open-front bauble with stag, £3.49; all Homebase.

Sparkling Silver

Opt for a minimalist look this season with layers of shimmery silver and icy white

It's so simple to conjure up a chic Christmas scheme if you stick to this pared-back colour palette. Choose a frosted tree and dress with a selection of wintry designs – snowflakes, snowballs and icicles are perfect. Shimmering finishes are key, so stock up on mercury glass, iridescent and pearlescent pieces and baubles with glittery details. Add tabletop decorations including trees and reindeer for a festive finishing touch.

Large white paper decorations, £10.50, Idyll Home.



Silver diamonds shatterproof bauble, £4, Debenhams.



Crackle-glaze bauble, £1, Poundland.



Snowflake decoration, £1.50, Wilko.



Shimmering silver streamers will transform everyday furniture into a seasonal showpiece that's ideal for displaying drinks and snacks

Pre-lit flocked Whistler tree, £230; tree decorations, from £6; giant glitter reindeer, £22; mercury glass tiered trees, from £20; pewter-effect candle holders, from £35; all House of Fraser.





Make a statement with a contemporary monochrome palette with striking metallic accents – for added impact place your tree against a dramatic dark backdrop

Christmas tree, £100;
baubles, from £1; gift
wrap, from £3; white
star lamp shade, £6;
all George.



Monochrome & metallics

Black, white and precious metals will make a winning combination this Christmas

For an on-trend look that's sophisticated too, you can't beat this glamorous mix of monochrome with copper, gold and silver highlights. Look out for wire shapes, metallic droplets and faceted baubles that will really stand out on your tree – sequined and pleated designs will also work well here. Complete your scheme with oversize paper decorations and metallic streamers for a stylish finishing touch.



Paper fans, from £9 for three; streamers, £8.50 for four; garland, £11; honeycombs with tassels, £12.50 for three; bauble honeycombs with glitter, £11 for five; giant honeycomb baubles, from £30; all Talking Tables.





Gold reindeer head decoration, £4, The Contemporary Home.

Mini acorns decoration, £6, House of Fraser.

Glass acorn, £4, Sainsbury's.

Natural collection

Copper accents bring an on-trend shimmery twist to this woodland-inspired look

Rustic naturals have long been a popular choice for Christmas, and this year touches of warm copper provide the perfect way to update your scheme. Conjure up the feeling of a woodland hideaway by dressing your tree with bunches of decorative acorns and wooden pine cones in a mix of greens, greys and natural tones, along with a few metallic finishes and decorations featuring feather motifs.



Feathered glass baubles in copper, £14.50 for six, Cox & Cox.



Glass rattan bauble, £2, George.



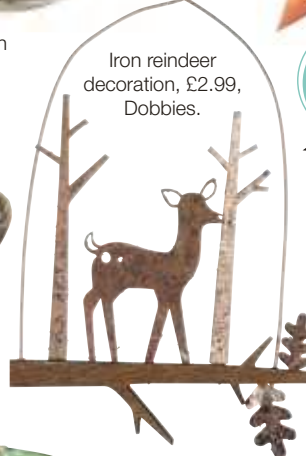
For stockists turn to page 112



Copper Christmas star decoration, £9.95, Made With Love Designs.



Wreath with stag, 60cm (dia), £19.99; artificial tree in aluminium pot, £19.99; glass and bark tree with woodland scene, £14.99; bark lantern, £7.99; all Dobbies.



Iron reindeer decoration, £2.99, Dobbies.



Green feather bauble, £4, John Lewis.

Gold glitter feather, £2, Marks & Spencer.



Killington 6ft tree, £149;
decorations, from £1.49;
copper tree tealight holder,
£2.99; candle, £24.99;
snow globes, from £8;
green moss stag, £12.99;
all Wyevale Garden Centres.

*Bring the outdoors
inside with a beautiful
array of decorations
for your tree – flocked
fruit, metallic leaves
and glittery pine
cones will all work
wonderfully together*



Carola van Dyke Liberty **deer head**, £895; **baubles**, from £2.95; Fleming & Howland blue velvet **chair**, £2,250; John Hanly lambswool **throw**, £110; Wiltshire Roberts **radio**, £225; Juniper **stocking**, £29.95; **gift wrap** and **accessories**, from a selection; all Liberty.

Look out for unusual places to display your decorations – here a few baubles add a touch of festive fun to this deer head

Glitter holly decoration, £2.99, Dobbies.



Blue hand-painted Marquise bauble, £5, Marks & Spencer.

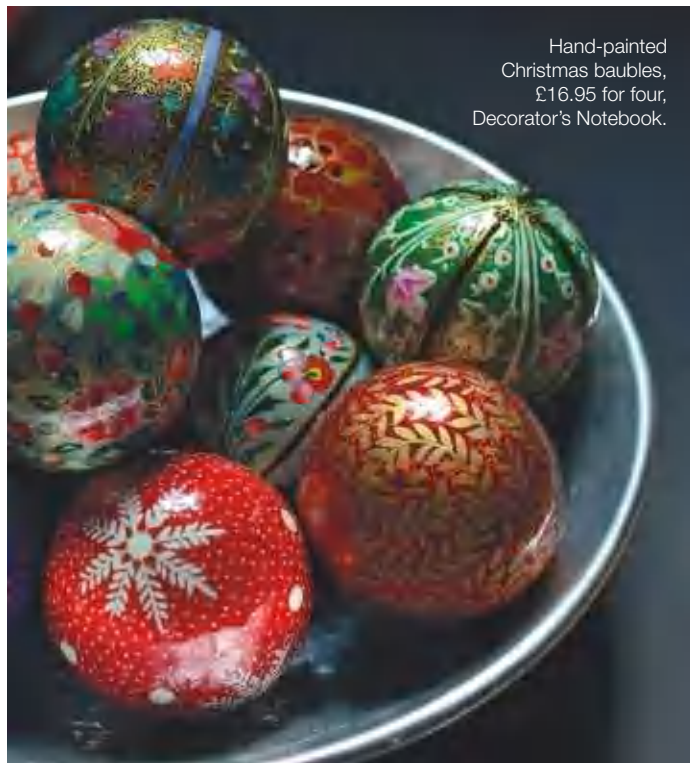
Decorative candy cane, £3.99, HomeSense.

Nutcracker decorations, £10 for five, George.

Colourful eclectic

Those looking for a vibrant scheme will love this mix of seasonal style, pattern and colour

Anything goes with this bold and beautiful Christmas theme, so don't be afraid to mix and match your patterns and clash your colours. Dazzling cobalt blue, deep purple, rich red and emerald green provide a jewel-like palette, alongside a combination of bright floral and tartan prints. Team hand-decorated baubles with kitsch figurines and a few nostalgic touches for a look you'll want to keep adding to year after year.



Hand-painted Christmas baubles, £16.95 for four, Decorator's Notebook.



For stockists turn to page 112

Gold glitter house decoration, £5, BHS.



Traditional present decoration, £2 for six, Tesco.



Large pine cone decoration, £1, Poundland.



Decorate-it-yourself Christmas tree poster, £10, Betsy Benn.



Wire hanging decoration, £4, Oliver Bonas.

Blue studded bauble, £5.99, HomeSense.

Gold ribbed teardrop bauble, £3.99, Dobbies.



Metal 3D star, £4.50; baubles, from £2.50; fairy lights, set of 160, £30; gold pineapple, £25; all John Lewis.

Decadent art deco

Indulge in this extravagant look filled with sumptuous show-stopping seasonal designs

The combination of dramatic hues and luxurious finishes will make this a Christmas look to remember. Start with a beautiful blue palette of teal, peacock and sapphire, then add in plenty of dazzling gold highlights. For decorations, embellishment is key – glittered, metallic and intricately beaded designs will turn your tree into a talking point. Choose a selection of teardrop and onion-shaped baubles, along with geometric pieces, then finish off the branches with oversize bows and feathers.



Antique gold ribbed bauble, £4, The Contemporary Home.

Navy sequined onion bauble, £6, Marks & Spencer.

Glitter star decoration, £2, George.



Gold berry spray, £1, Poundland.



Peacock decorations with fan tail, £7.95 each, Rigby & Mac.





Blue spruce 6ft **tree**, £175;
decorations, from £3;
Eltham **chair** in Lasenby fabric,
£649; Conran Kitson **coffee table**,
£299; diamond **candle holder**,
£29.50; triangular **hurricane**
lantern, £25; plume **candle**,
£9.50; all Marks & Spencer.

Decorations featuring flamboyant peacocks and pineapples are the ideal choice for this look, adding a touch of fun wherever they're used



SITTING COMFORTABLY

Make sure there's enough room for all the family with a generously sized dining table. The Amore table with cream-painted frame, £475, from Next, seats six people and measures 180 (w) x 90 (d) x 75cm (h). A pair of matching chairs with natural stained legs and natural fabric is £325. www.next.co.uk.

IN THE *festive* DINING ROOM

Choose pieces that will last you throughout Christmas and the New Year celebrations

Circle of light

We love the idea of an elegant pale and sparkling festive table. Silver tealight circle with 18 holders, £80; Mateus lace bowls with lids, 13cm (dia), £40 each; stainless steel salt and pepper set with two polished knot salt spoons, £39.95; all Adventino. 01529 307812, www.adventino.co.uk.



Sprinkle some joy with table confetti, £4, The Contemporary Home www.tch.net.

Noel letter light, 48cm (w) x 21cm (h) x 5cm (d), £25, George. www.asda.com.

NOEL

Bauble placecard holders, £7.99 for six; place cards, £1.99 for 10; both Neviti. www.neviti.com.

Stag and tree napkins in Taupe, set of four, £15, Ragged Rose. www.raggedrose.com.



For stockists turn to page 112

LITTLE ROBIN RED

Sophie Allport's seasonal designs are very understated, but will add a real sense of Christmas joy to any table setting. Robin & Mistletoe napkins, £13 for a set of four; table runner, 35 (w) x 280cm (l), £19; other items in the range include oven gloves, china, mugs, gift wrap, tags and gift bags. 0845 017 7866, www.sophieallport.com.

3 OF THE BEST TABLETOP TREES



Real tree in an aluminium bucket-style pot, perfect for a child's bedside table, £19.99, Dobbies.



White cut-out tree, 43 cm (h), makes a perfect table centrepiece £11.95, Melody Maison.



Artificial tree decorated with baubles and poinsettias with hessian sack base, 61cm (h), £15, B&Q.

Part of the enjoyment of the Christmas season is planning different **table themes**. They don't have to be all-encompassing – simply pick a colour scheme and get creative!

Metallic accents

For an opulent look that can be put together using items that are probably already in your dresser, choose silvered glass and crystal stemware

Wilmore extending **dining table**, £699; tall mercury glass **bonbon jar**, £55; Sommelier **champagne glasses**, set of four, £29.50; Pure Coupe **bowls**, £4 each; silver hanging **star**, £15; all Marks & Spencer.

Christmas bells napkin rings, set of four, £16, Laura Ashley.

Polished Knot cutlery, £29.95 for a four-piece setting, Viva Lagoon at Furnish.

Frozen acrylic jewel snowflake, £2, Wilko.

Crystal candelabra, 900mm (h), £520, Kenneth Turner.

Glass and nickel Duck decanter, 25cm (h), £55, MiaFleur.



A splash of red

Nordic and Scandinavian themes are striking, simple and straightforward to achieve – with no need to visit the North Pole!

Limited-edition arrangement, 52cm (h), £449, Bloom.



Mini saucer crackers, pack of eight, £7, Talking Tables.



Red glass decanter, £4.99, Wyevale Garden Centres.



Happy Holiday collection jug, £12, Sainsbury's.

Matching placemats also available



Winter Woodland coasters, set of four, £4.99, Kitchen Craft.

Crockery, £32 for a 12-piece set; wine glasses, set of four, £12; tumblers, set of four, £8; tablecloth, from £24; runner, £10; crackers, set of 12, £12; cutlery, £16 for a 12-piece set; all from the Arden collection, Next.



Wine glasses, £1 each, Poundland.



Broste Copenhagen house candles, £8.55 each, The Scandinavian Shop.

Naturally appealing

Don't worry about polished perfection – for a relaxed style, add elements of natural wood and a rustic, twiggy wreaths

Grey Sketch **crockery**, £35 for a 12-piece set; whitewashed pre-lit **wreath**, £25; decorations and accessories, from £1.50; all Sainsbury's.



Stag tealight lantern, £6, Wilko.



Clay Christmas coasters, set of four, £12.95, Melody Maison.



Decorative wooden reindeer, £12.50, Debenhams.



Vintage wooden breadboards, from £95, I&JL Brown.



Antler tabletop candelabra, £18, Next.

Gilded choices

Elevate the Christmas table to the heights of luxury with a sumptuous golden theme

Gold-band, 12-piece dinner set, £35; gold charger plate, £1.50; 16-piece cutlery set, £12; gold napkins, set of two, £4; beaded placemat, set of two, £12; glitter rose, set of three, £3; luxury crackers, set of six, £16; all Tesco.



Midwinter nest decoration with gold eggs, £3.50, John Lewis.



Gold fabric heart decoration with scallop pattern, £1, B&Q.



Gold paper canapé plates, set of 12, £3.50, Talking Tables.

PH&I LOVES

Gold feather cheese knife set, £35, Laura Ashley.



For stockists turn to page 112

Gold aluminium coasters, set of four, £24, MiaFleur.



Mercury-glass tealight holder, £7.99, Dunelm.



Packet of gold and white paper napkins, £3, Berry Red.



Gold-finish wine cooler with leather handles, £99, Sweetpea & Willow.





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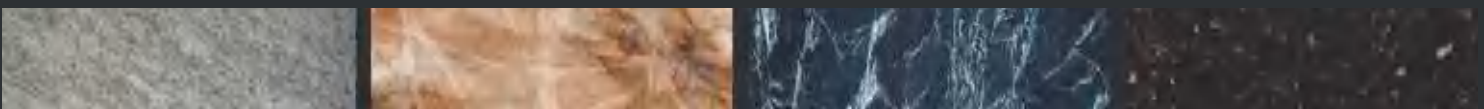
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20 IDEAS TO MAKE YOUR HOME

beautiful for Christmas

The prettiest ways to decorate every room of your house for a stylish celebration from top to bottom

1 FESTIVE FIGURES

The mantelpiece becomes a focal point at Christmas time, and provides the perfect place to create a charming festive display. Large red metal robin, £5; robin picks, £1.50 each; traditional present decoration, set of six, £2; nutcracker soldier, £4; all Tesco. 0800 323 4050, www.tesco.com.



2

OFF THE HOOK

This delicate golden flower and bird wall hook, £12.95, from Melody Maison, is ideal for displaying jewellery – but we love the idea of using it at Christmas to hang clusters of baubles from. 01302 741000, www.melodymaison.co.uk.



3

► IN THE ROUND

Love them or loathe them, you can't deny that sprouts look incredibly stylish when they're used to make a wreath. This design measures 40cm (dia) and costs £31 from The Contemporary Home. www.tch.net.

- Turn to page 14 to see more beautiful festive wreaths.



4 Space-saving tree

In a room where space is at a premium, we love this lifesize, typographic Christmas tree wall hanging, £50, from Betsy Benn.

Try decorating it with strings of popcorn or hanging LED string lights behind it. It measures 200 (l) x 1145cm (w). 01242 570731, www.betsybenn.co.uk.

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5 Rustic styling

Keep the look seasonal with

the Antler four-light wall candelabra, £270, from David Hunt Lighting. Shown here in a rustic finish, it's also available in black or white, and measures 55 (h) X 48 (w) x 22cm (d). 01608 661590, www.davidhunt-lighting.com.



6

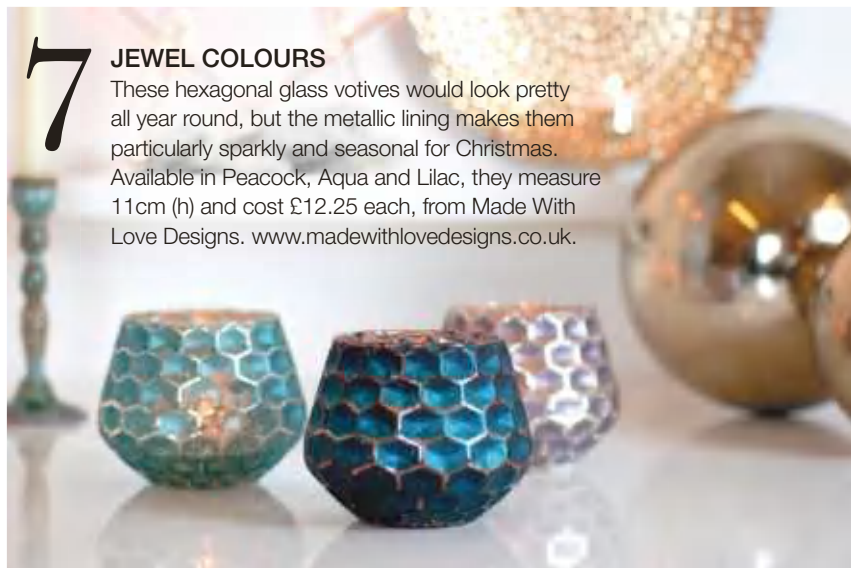
WINTER WHITES

Fresh flowers, foliage and decorative arrangements from Waitrose Florist will add a classic festive touch to even the smallest corner of your home. Festive Nordic wreath with battery-operated lights, 30cm (dia), £42; candle centrepiece, £32; jam jar trio with Nordic heart decorations, £35. 0800 188881, www.waitroseflorist.com.



7 JEWEL COLOURS

These hexagonal glass votives would look pretty all year round, but the metallic lining makes them particularly sparkly and seasonal for Christmas. Available in Peacock, Aqua and Lilac, they measure 11cm (h) and cost £12.25 each, from Made With Love Designs. www.madewithlovedesigns.co.uk.



8 CURL UP ON THE SOFA

Christmas cushions are a quick and easy way of updating your living room without spending a fortune. Look at the home range from H&M for a quirky selection. Cushion covers, from £3.99 each; tray, £12.99; acorn storage pot, £9.99. 0344 736 9000, www.hm.com.





9 Silent night

Tell the nativity story with this Away In A Manger hand-painted nativity scene. The set of 12 wooden figures and stable costs £37 from The Great Little Trading Company. 0344 848 6000, www.gltc.co.uk.



10

◀ SWEET THINGS

Keep your homemade Christmas biscuits in this decorative glass bonbon jar, 30cm (h), £20.52, from Furnish. It's also perfect for displaying a colourful selection of baubles. 0345 544 4044, www.furnish.co.uk.

▶ GLITTERING PRIZE

For a spectacular tree topper, look at the range from The Chelsea Gardener. This gold angel in resin with sequined fabric is 38cm (h) and costs £59.99. 020 7352 5656, www.chelseagardener.com.



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12 FLAG IT UP

Put up some bunting over the Christmas dining table for a real celebratory look. This 5m length of white/red star cotton bunting costs £15 by Ragged Rose. Matching table runner, napkins and aprons also available. 01622 812897, www.raggedrose.com.



14

The icing on the cake

A plain white iced cake with a wooden topper is a winning combination. It's fuss-free, and the decorations can be saved for next year too. This set from The Contemporary Home includes a tree, snowman, reindeer and four robins and costs £7.50. 0845 130 8229, www.tch.net.

- Have a hunt around antique shops for pressed-glass cake stands, widely available, at around £5 or less.



13 TABLE TALK

Decorate everyone's place setting

at the Christmas lunch table with cluster of baubles arranged in bowls – with name cards to direct guests to their seats for an extra-special touch. Baubles and table decorations, from a selection, all Poundland. 0800 7315622, www.poundland.co.uk.

We can't resist a cute pug, and were delighted to find this glorious tree decoration, 11cm (h), £4.95, by Rigby & Mac. 020 8761 1011, www.rigbyandmac.com.



15



◀ BOXED SET

Update the tree with this decorative hexagonal box containing seven vintage-style character baubles, £14, from Debenhams. 0844 561 6161, www.debenhams.com.

16

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Global delight

Everyone loves a Christmas snow scene. This light-up cloche features a retro VW car, house and Xmas trees. It measures 22cm (h) and costs £12 from Sainsbury's. We're tempted to start a collection of kitsch festive decorations and snow globes, so will be keeping our eyes peeled for other quirky designs. www.sainsburys.co.uk.



18 Christmas bedding will signal to children that the big day is nearly here. Jolly Holiday and Santa One More Sleep single duvet sets, from £35; cushions, from £12; stockings, £10; polar bear side table, £99; decorations from £3; all from BHS. 0344 411 6000, www.bhs.co.uk.



19 ROOM WITH A VIEW

Stag motifs are so on trend right now – and not just for Christmas. This Red Stag fabric can be made up into a Roman blind, and costs around £51 for a design measuring 60 (w) x 120cm (d); curtains also available, both made to order, from Direct Blinds. 0333 920 7956, www.directblinds.co.uk.



20

FROSTY LOOKS

Make things really Christmassy with some Frostbrite window film, which is cut to order and gives the appearance of acid-etched glass. This is the Navidad Christmas tree design, others available include snowflakes (01), spiral tree and star (012), and holly (004). Prices start from £63 for a 100 x 100cm sheet, from The Window Film Company. 01494 857009, www.windowfilm.co.uk.

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SCARLET CHRISTMAS

If you've got guests for Christmas brunch, bright red metal stools and chairs will make a real festive impact. Portobello table, £199; Marseille red chairs, £49 each; stools, £25 each; 12-piece dinner set, £20; mini trees in Fairisle pots, £20 each; 6ft artificial flocked tree, £45; all Tesco. www.tesco.com.

Christmas IN THE KITCHEN

Keep the breakfast, lunch and dinner table festive with seasonal buys in shades of red

Festive kitchen kit

Vintage-style kitchen equipment sets the tone for a warm look, and these cheery mugs and jugs are just right for sipping mulled wine or hot chocolate while finishing off the Christmas cooking. From £5 for an espresso mug; £9.99 for two tea towels; all Online Kitchenware, www.onlinekitchenware.co.uk.



Clever cake ideas

The idea of baking a Christmas cake can be daunting for amateur chefs, so keep it simple with a shop-bought design, then decorate it yourself with bunting and homemade gingerbread men. Bunting decoration cake topper, £4.50, Luck & Luck (01752 881930, www.luckandluck.co.uk).

BREAKFAST SPECIAL...

Serve eggs in a stylish thermoplastic resin Dressed egg cup, £17, by Marcel Wanders for Alessi, which comes with a polished 'egg opener' spoon, also available in black, yellow and white. www.alessi.com/en.



Snowy smiles

Who could resist these ceramic salt and pepper pots, £16, from Cath Kidston – excellent for the breakfast table, but also a perfect Christmas present. 0845 026 2440, www.cathkidston.com.



3 OF THE BEST XMAS CAKE ACCESSORIES



Holiday tree Bundt cake tin in heavy-duty aluminium, 25cm (dia), £37, Skandihome.



Festive cook's measure by Tala, with levels for ground almonds, raisins, sugar and flour, £15, John Lewis.



At Home With Ashley Thomas springform cake tin, with stencil and a mini icing sugar sieve, £15, Debenhams.



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GIFTS FOR...

Children

Spoil the little ones in your life with these classic toys



The Jolly Roger handmade fabric pirate ship, £36, Oskar&Ellen.



Vilac red metal car, £74.99, Amazon.



Wild & Soft plush moose head, £49.99, Urban Mummy.



Ridley's Atomic red wooden ukelele, £24.95, Wild & Wolf.

A 19-piece melamine tea set in a storage box



Belle & Boo teashop tea set, £34.99. The Oak Room.



Fancy Nulle soft toy, £78, LuckyBoySunday at Rume.



Rocking horse in Liberty Claire Aude print, £130, Mamas & Papas.



Wheeled car mobile storage chest, £39, Vertbaudet.



Face maker wooden toy block set, £34.95, Howkapow.



Elmar teddy bear, £45, Steiff.



GIFTS FOR...

Him

Gent's grooming gifts and cool gadgets for the man who has it all



Bronze binoculars, £90, Natural History Museum.

Ferrari Formula One international edition print, £119.99, Art.co.uk.



Beard grooming kit, £30, Royal Academy of Arts.



Le Baigneur exfoliating soap for men, £5.95, Howkapow.



The Bubble Bauble, for storing corks from special occasions, £19.95, www.31dover.com.



Pug on a plug, £6, Marks & Spencer.



Basil and coriander eco-soy wax Man Candle, £12.99, The Oak Room.



Cartography hip flask, £24.95, Wild & Wolf.



Aftershave wash bag, £21.99, Chase and Wonder.



Retro game console controller, £15, National Media Museum.



Crosley Cruiser vinyl turntable, £69.99, Amazon.

GIFTS FOR...

Her

Spoil a female friend or relative with these pampering treats



Colouring Book, £9.95, Liberty.



Ted Baker storage boxes, set of three, £34.95, Wild & Wolf.



Sampler bluetooth retro radio, £79.95, Emma Bridgewater.



Orla Kiely bath and body set, £34, Cuckooland.



Marca grey cashmere slippers, £75, Lexington.



Pina Colada organiser, £12.50, Caroline Gardner.



Mug, from the Dogs Trust range, £17.50, Fenella Smith.



Polar Loop 2 activity tracker, £90.78, Amazon



Jo Sampson for Waterford Crystal perfume bottle, £85, John Lewis.



Greyson Perry silk scarf, £75, Tate.

Autograph glamour sparkle ring, £22.50, Marks & Spencer.



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Stacking mugs, £20, Imperial War Museum.



Roots & Shoots large tool box, £39.95, Magpie.



Daisies iPad Air tablet case, £35, Fileofax.



Thoughtful Gardener bee house, £19.95, Red Candy.



Gardener's handkerchiefs, set of three, £9.95, Annabel James.



Crabtree & Evelyn La Source Hand Therapy (part of a two-piece gift set), £19, Amazon.



Sophie Conran garden kneeler for Burgon & Ball, £23, The Orchard.



Bee Lover's gift set, £24.50, The Oak Room.



Perfect for placing in the conservatory



Watering can, £15, Marks & Spencer.

Buy a tree as a gift, prices from £233, including planting and watering in, The Tree and Garden Gift Company.



Ragged Rose PVC garden waist apron, £17, Gift Wrapped & Gorgeous.

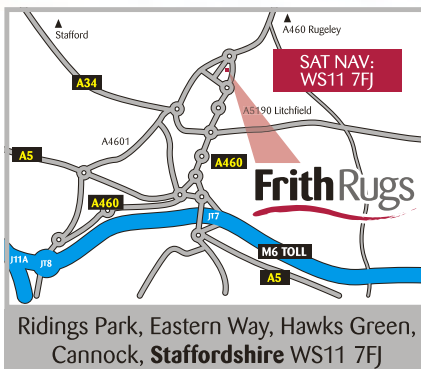
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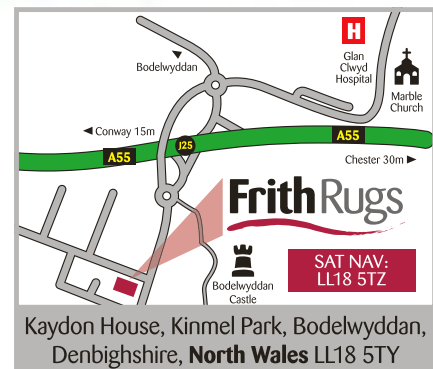
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Sage by Heston Blumenthal bean-to-cup coffee machine, £549.99, John Lewis.



Metamorphosis apron, £25, Mrs Moore's Vintage Store.



Christmas chocolate box, £16.50, Prestat.



For stockists turn to page 112

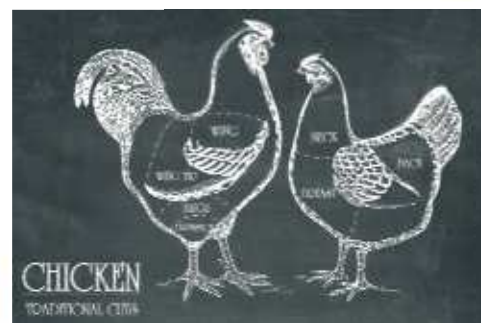
Enamelware butter dish, £19.95, Mini Moderns at Wild & Wolf.



Jagger red petal oven mitt, £21.99, Lilly Lory.



Old-school tablet stand, £15, The Pod Company.



Butcher's Guide II print, £84.99. Art.co.uk.



Nessie soup ladle, £13.50, Red Candy.

Hug Doug grips your spoon to stop it disappearing into the pan



Hug Doug, £8.95, The Pod Company.



Château d'Estoublon olive oil, £33.50, Le Flacon Couture at Amazon.

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Encourage your artistic friends to get creative with these novel ideas



Craft book storage tin, £19.99, The Oak Room.



Tape measure, £14.95, Wild & Wolf.



Make your own rabbit craft kit, £12.95, Dotcomgiftshop.



The Makery stag head craft kit, £24.95, Wild & Wolf.



Embroidered fox terrier handmade cushion, £30, Poppy Treffry.



Filled round sewing box, £17.50, Marks & Spencer.



Sewing and knitting glasses case, £12.95, Gift Wrapped & Gorgeous.



Alice Melvin cut-and-sew apron, £10, Tate.



Yarn holder, £9.95, House of Bath.



Mini sewing machine, £49, John Lewis.



Children's learn-to-knit suitcase, £24.95, Cuckooland.

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By Marian Ashcroft

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Students also receive individual, personal tuition from a professional writer who gives guidance on style, technique and marketing.

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The college also provides a whole support system to novice writers that includes their tutors, their advisors, free resources and chance to converse with other writing students on their website.

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Tim Skelton "Besides seeing my first book in print, I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated yet more guide-books for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA. I am writing flat-out, and getting paid what I can now describe with pride as a decent salary. And it is thanks to The Writers Bureau that I got this chance. It provided me with the opportunity to realise an ambition which I didn't know how to nurture. I do now."

Published



Hannah Evans "I've been published in The Guardian and Good Life earning £400. And now I've got my first book published by Bloomsbury called MOB Rule: Lessons Learned by a Mother of Boys. The Writers Bureau course provided me with structure, stopped my procrastination but most importantly it provided the impetus to try something different."

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Chris Green "I've had 30 pieces of work accepted by various publications since I started my Writers Bureau course – a mere 18 months ago. I contemplate that fact and I am amazed to have come so far in such a short time. Thanks to the careful and patient tutoring provided by The Writers Bureau and the boundless confidence this has given me, I can continue to explore my potential and see where it takes me."

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Black magic

Get krafty

Clockwise from top left: 'Reindeer mail' gift bag, £1.50, The Contemporary Home. Vintage-style tags, set of five, £1.50, Luck & Luck. **Gift wrap set**, comprising six gift bags, stickers and string – perfect for small, awkward-to-wrap presents, £3.99, The Oak Room. Christmas pudding **sticky tape**, £5.95 per roll, Nancy & Betty Studio. 'With Love' **stamp**, £2.50, The Oak Room.



A sprig of fir adds the perfect finishing touch to presents. Midwinter Forest paper, 10m roll, £12.50. Cox & Cox.



Wrap up presents using festive fabric. Fabric, from the Christmas collection, £14.99 per m, Prestigious Textiles.



Simply red

Clockwise from top left: Twelve Days of Christmas **stickers**, set of 35, £1.50, Luck & Luck. Snowflake **badges**, set of two, £2.95, Clare Loves. **Gift wrap** (clockwise from top): Golden Tree, Christmas Pear Tree and Russian Tree, £2.20 per sheet, Caroline Gardner. Merry Christmas **ribbon**, £4, The Contemporary Home. Fifties-style red **gift wrap**, £1.95 per sheet, Dotcomgiftshop.



Blue tones

Clockwise from top left: Kitsch Christmas **gift tags**, set of five, £1.50, Paperchase. **Bespoke gift wrapping service** – perfect for a special present, available in London and the Home Counties, prices from £3, Wrapsody. 'Ride Away' **wrapping paper**, £1.95 per sheet, Chase and Wonder. 'Jingle Brights' luxury **gift bag**, £1, Poundland. Spearmint neon **twine**, £2.95, Wild & Wolf.



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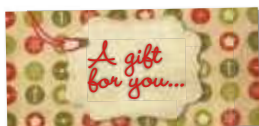
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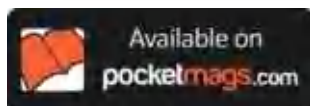
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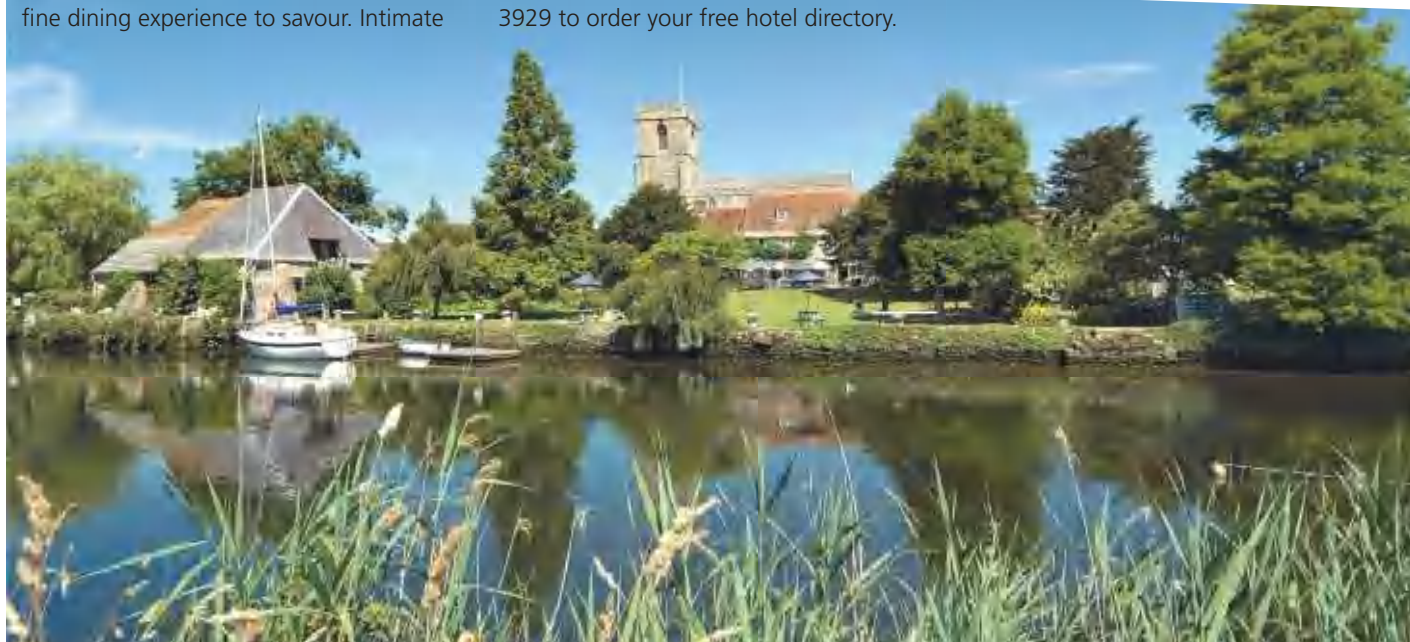
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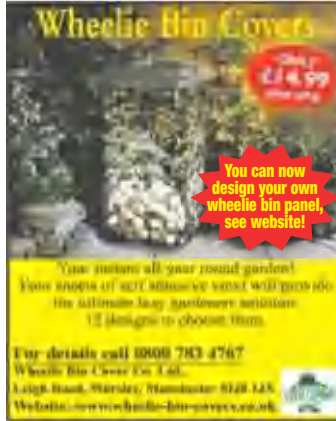
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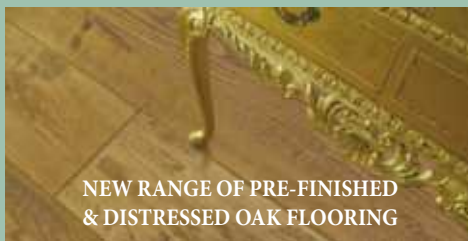
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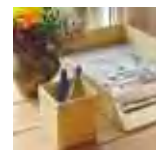
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61



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32

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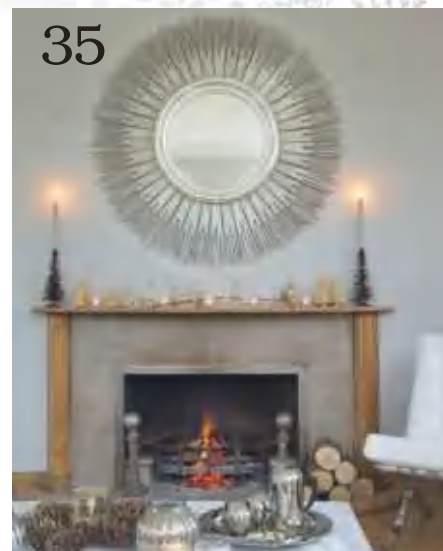
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76





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